Juanita S. Dilley
Clover Lick, W.Va.
Pocahontas County
May 21, 1940
Ch. 5 section I c

Games and Pastimes----Men-----Boys

* Jeremiah Friel, who came here around 1774, was a jovial companion for his sons. He encouraged them, from infancy, in the favorite pastimes of the period; running foot races, wrestling and boxing. A favorite indoor game for boys was called" weighing bacon". A loop was fixed at one end of a rope or trace chain, the other end was thrown over a beam or joist, The feet were placed in the loop, then seizing the other end of the rope with the hands they would swing. It required practice and nice balancing to swing, although it looked easy to one who had never tried it. For safety it was best to have a big pile of straw on which to light.

Jeremiah Friel and his sons were noted reapers. At that day there was cooperative harvesting. Robert Gays' wheat was usually the first to ripen. Beginning there, all hands from Jim Bridgers, at Harter, down would come hallowing and singing, waving their sickles, eager to see who could cut the first sheaf and make the best record. Then from field to field up the river the harvesters would progress until Bridger's harvest was reaped; thence to William Sharp's, Josiah Browns, John Sharp's and sometimes Robert Moore's at Edray. Then the sickle club would disband with great hilarity to their respective homes.

The youngest son of Valentine Cackley, Sr. was named Jacob He seems to have been very fond of athletic sports, running, vres-

tling and pitching quoits. One of the most popular divresions of that time was to see who could throw a pumpkin the highest and catch it as it came down. Another diversion was to skip flat stones over the water.

oo

About the year of 1890, thirty-five Englishmen settled at Mingo in Randolph County. Since an Englishman is always interested in outdoor sports, they educated the boys of Pocahontas and Randolph in the sports of England. It was a 27 mile ride from Marlinton to Mingo, but every boy by some hook or crook managed to have a horse to ride to Mingo. They taught them to play cricket, tennis, polo, cribbage, and gave them an insight into steeple chase, paper chase, and fox hunting on horse back. But the game that took like wild fire was soccer football.

One of the best things that they learned from the English was that it was the thing to respond instantly and agree to play in any game, at any time, to the best of their ability and skill. They got the boys so they would try anything, and they soon found that they could hold their own.

Football seems to have been the principal sport of England at that time. As soon as the boys of Pocahontas saw the difference between the educated and the uneducated foot, the whole country got animated. There were 25 teams in Pocahontas County alone.

There was great devotion to the game. Great crowds of people lined the grounds. The season lasted from October to May, match games not being scheduled in the dead of winter on account of snow possibilities, but practice games went on thr-

ough the winter, when the ground was bare.

No age seems to have been barred. Up on Elk River there were giants in those days, captains courageous, whom nothing could daunt. A match game against another community was pulled off one day and on the Elk team there were three generations in direct line represented. In the goal, Grandfather William Gibson; afullback his son James Gibson; and as a forward his grandson Levi Gibson. In 1925, James Gibson as a man 68 years old, ran with the hounds after a bear, from Gibsons Knob to the Sevener place on the head of Slaty Fork and was at the killing of next to the biggest bear that ever fell in these parts, Old Lame Paw, the sheep killer.

It was about this same time that Uncle John Hannah, up in the eighties, put on four pair of specs and won the turkey at a rifle shooting match.

Soccer football can be played on every village green. It does not take any special kind of clothes, and it is the very best training for Rugby football.

The six footers on Elk had a famous team called "Ironsides. They were hard to beat.

As between the Marlinton team and the Mingo team, the Ironsides favored the English team, so to reach Mingo the Marlinton boys had to travel across Elk through a hostile country.

The Ironsides fuenished some great athletes in those days, and by the way, Elk has the world record for a running broad jump. Joseph Hannah, a pioneer, was made the victim of a practical joke. It was arranged to give him a scare. He was to work in the field with Old Dick a negro. Indian times were

still fresh in the memory. Three boys fired on them from the woods. Old Dick fell down and pretended to be shot. Hannah ran to the house. On his way he jumped a gully. Later when the jump was measured it was found to be 42 feet from one track to the next.

After the football games each man was required to tell a story, sing a song, or turn a summersault for the amusement of the crowd.

* History of Pocahontas-- Price

oo W. Va. Blue Book 1926
Andrew Price